



Communication Development of Children Who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing Living in Urban vs Rural Areas

Kayla Winkler, B.S.

Communication Disorders and Deaf Education Department, Fontbonne University

Overview

Children who are deaf/hard of hearing (D/HOH) living in rural areas are faced by many challenges in the process of developing communication skills. Information on this topic was collected through a variety of means including family/professional interviews and an academic research review. The issues that arose as primary difficulties for families with children who are D/HOH living in rural communities included limited access to early identification/intervention services, qualified professionals, and necessary resources. Through the use of telepractice, these challenges can be reduced.

Methods

- Read research related to D/HOH communication development, rural access to services, and tele-practice.
- Conducted interviews with:
 - Family(s) of children who are D/HOH.
 - Professionals at deaf education programs.
 - Professionals in rural area school districts.
 - Professionals working for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
- Created a map of with specialized schools/programs for deaf/hard of hearing.
- Designed a support/resource handout for families.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the in-depth research conducted revealed that children who are D/HOH living in rural areas face many challenges in the process of developing communication skills related to limited access to early identification/intervention services, qualified professionals, and necessary resources. Although there are many challenges present for children who are D/HOH living in rural areas, telepractice can alleviate problems faced by families.

Challenges for children who are deaf/hard of hearing living in **Rural Areas** include:

- **Early identification**
- **Early intervention services**
- **Qualified professionals**
- **Necessary Resources**



Take a picture to
learn more.

Teletherapy

Benefits

- Reduces travel time and money spent on gas
- Promotes a family coaching model
- Offers access to a trained professional
- Allows the ability to train other professionals
- Eliminates missed appointments due to weather and sickness

Drawbacks

- Cost of equipment
- Malfunctioning of the technology
- Increased planning time for the practitioner

Overall

- Benefits seem to outweigh the risks; although Telepractice is not the end all be all, it is a spectacular option for families without access to face-to-face services

Stay in Touch!

Kayla Winkler
Speech-Language Pathology
Graduate Student
winklerk@fontbonne.edu